

**MINUTES**  
**Division of Family Services**  
**Advisory & Advocacy Council Meeting**  
**January 16, 2008**

**Attendees:** PJ Facciolo, Leslie Newman, Suzanne Seubert, Janice Mink, Julia Pearce, Ellen Levin, Allison McDowell, Laura Miles, Carlyse Giddins, Shirley Roberts, Joseph Smack.

Julia called the meeting to order at 10:10 am.

**Approval of Minutes from prior meeting** – Motion to approve minutes passed unanimously.

**APPLA Workgroup** – The Alternative Planned Permanent Living Arrangement workgroup has been meeting to resolve the high number of children in care with a goal of APPLA. At the time of conveyance, 1/3 of children had APPLA as a goal with a goal to reduce the number to 15% or less (the federal target). Julia asked how we could help to move the process forward to find homes for these kids and divert them from a goal of APPLA. Janice shared her personal story and said that we have to press hard for the Behavioral Consultants recommended in the Governor's budget. Leslie inquired what role they would serve for our youth. Carlyse said that currently we provide mental health assessments for youth ages 4-17 years of age who enter care, but the foster parents are oftentimes overwhelmed by the behaviors the children present. The Behavioral Consultants are a support to help stabilize the youth and provide more positive outcomes. Staff members will be collocated similar to the domestic violence and substance abuse coordinators. All of the logistics have not been worked out to date. PJ inquired if children who did not show mental health behaviors in the assessment, could they go back and work with the Behavioral Consultants if warranted? Laura said that there are more outreach efforts to offer assessments for children in care beyond initial intake. A foster care provider can work with DFS staff to access an assessment opportunity.

**Caseload / Workload** – Allison McDowell presented on the work of the CPAC subcommittee examining the caseloads and workloads of DFS frontline caseworker, Court workers, OCA staff, etc. The subcommittee was reconstituted by CPAC after discovering that high caseloads and workloads were still impacting child safety. They have been working for two years and conducted workload studies of DFS portal cases and transfer from investigation to treatment services. Allison relayed that the average treatment worker has 131 hours per month in which to provide services for 18 cases. This would mean a worker would have 6.25 hours per case per month. Foster care cases usually have court and visitation requirements far beyond the average hours per case. The subcommittee looked at the impact of state and federal policies and expectations, e.g. HIPPA, ASFA, CFSR, ICPC, statutory changes, Child Protection Registry, etc. The subcommittee examined the portal entry piece and discovered that Delaware accepts 77% of reports for investigation. The national average is 67%. They examined definitions of

abuse and neglect to see if that could be a reason that DE was higher than the national average, but decided not to suggest any changes as the quality of reports are good. The subcommittee examined if cases were being transferred from investigation to treatment inappropriately – they found that cases were appropriately transferred. In examining other states, they noticed 39 were engaging in a public/private partnerships and that we should examine this in Delaware. Allison discussed Senate Bill 113 that lowered caseload standards for investigation workers from 14 to 11 cases. The original bill contained a provision for treatment caseloads, but would have required a fiscal note for additional personnel. SB 113 was amended to only include the investigation workers and was quickly passed before the summer break. SB 180 was introduced to address treatment caseloads. This would lower the standard to 12 cases over a period of three years. The money associated with the bill would be for contracted partners and not for additional DFS treatment staff. The subcommittee is examining the public/private partnership to look at functionality, amenability, best practices and expectations. They ruled out intake and investigations as areas for a public/private partnership. They hope to have recommendations readied in April. Carlyse stated we are taking a systemic approach in documenting everything we ask a worker to do. If we ask them to do more with less, we are jeopardizing child safety.

**DFS Update** – Carlyse reported that DFS has accomplished much in the past year and still has a list of things to do in the years ahead. The turnover rate for frontline staff for the first half of fiscal year 2009 is 3.4%. This is great and continues a trend of low turnover rates. This holiday season has been great for children in care – CASAs, OCA, the Dept. of Justice, Delmarva Power and other businesses, families and community partners have provided wonderful parties and gifts for children. Carlyse reported that our partnership with the Milton Hershey School that began a few years ago is growing stronger. Delaware just gained admission for a fifth child in care. Carlyse happily reported we met our goal and will continue to press for more admissions. Opportunities exist, including an 11% increase in the number of hotline reports. Children ages 0-6 years and 13 and up constitute the majority of the increased foster care placements. We are developing short and long term goals to address the volume issues. Staff are working a lot of overtime resulting in a salary deficit. In order to invoke the caseload standard legislation, a request for casual seasonal staff must be made to the Office of Management and Budget and then be considered for full-time status in the next budget year. We cannot say with confidence that the six month spike will continue and will wait for three more months of data to see if this is a trend. Carlyse said that the next years will be trying – resources will be tight and it encourages us to be creative in finding solutions. In December 2007, there were 972 children in paid foster care and 1,151 in state custody. The numbers are really stretching resources and personnel. Many foster families adopt children from foster care. While this is a great thing, it reduces the number of families able to take children in foster care. Carlyse reported that the Child and Family Services Review Performance Improvement Plan is still being negotiated with the feds. Carlyse asked for the Council's support for the upcoming Joint Finance Committee Hearing scheduled for February 12, 10am at Legislative Hall. DFS is scheduled to present at 1:30pm. Carlyse stated that the Behavioral Consultants are recommended as enhancements to the FACTS database.

Items that were not recommended were money for post-adoptive services and a licensing specialist with the Office of Child Care Licensing. Carlyse thanked the Council for their continued support. Included in the Governor's Recommended Budget is:

1. \$250,000 in Management Information Systems for modifications to the Family and Children Tracking System (FACTS)
2. \$187,500 in Child Mental Health for behavioral health consultants to provide direct therapeutic care
3. \$359,300 in Department of Justice contractual increase due to volume of services
4. \$2,400,000 in Population Contingency to address increased volume and complexity of children entering care

Suzanne inquired about group homes in New Castle County. Carlyse reported a new home for eight young men had been opened in Townsend and there had been no progress for a girl's only home in NCC. Carlyse handed out the CPAC training dates which will be part of a website managed by OCA. There is a large conference April 30-May 2 primarily led by the OCA and the Child Death, Near Death, and Stillbirth Commission.

**Other Business** – The Council voted to recommend that Julia testify on behalf of DFS at the JFC Hearing and that the Council will be supporting post adoptive services, Behavioral Health Consultants, and Caseload / Workload reduction.

Leslie asked DFS to advertise the availability of funds from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fund for workers and foster parents to request.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm.

**Next Meeting – April 16, 2008, 10am-Noon, in Room 198 of the DSCYF Administration Building. 1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Joseph D. Smack  
Executive Assistant  
Division of Family Services